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who has accused him as a conceited person, or dared to assail him in this the weakest and most absurd, if not the strongest and holiest point of his character.

Clearly enough the easiest way to account for Christianity is to regard it, as it claims to be, as a supernatural religion. The human and natural in it testify to the superhuman and supernatural in its origin and character. Its Founder was, to speak very tamely, a person too wise to be deluded, too holy to deceive. He unmistakably claimed for himself not only supernatural power, but a Divine character. Sceptical opposition to Christianity, when exposed to plain natural tests, evinces the most unnatural hypotheses, the most violent, unlikely, and absurd marvels. The miracles of the Bible are startling; those of infidelity are monstrous.

ART. XI.—1. *La Grèce Contemporaine*. Par EDMOND ABOUT. Paris. 1855.

2. *Le Roi des Montagnes*. Par EDMOND ABOUT. Paris. 1856.*

THE events which have recently occurred in Greece, the dethronement of Otho, the interregnum, and the subsequent election of Prince George of Denmark to the crown, have excited considerable attention in Europe. Greece is like a spoiled child under the guardianship of a number of jealous aunts, who are more or less disturbed according to the proportion in which the affection of their pet is distributed among them. Any irregularity in the conduct of the foreign relations of that miniature monarchy of a million souls is attended with complications that wellnigh throw the five great powers into hysteria. But it is otherwise on this side of the Atlantic. In ordinary

* These books of M. About were *noticed*, but not *reviewed*, shortly after their appearance. As the first of them is not yet obsolete, or even obsolescent, in its general statements, while the other has a vividness of characterization and an intensity of dramatic power which ought to render it a work of more than ephemeral interest, we have thought the interval that has elapsed since their publication an insufficient reason for declining to print this article. — ED.

times the bloodless revolution of the Greeks would arouse but little interest, our country having long survived its Philhellenic enthusiasm ; and now that we have a rebellion of our own, little Greece, five thousand miles away, is entirely ignored. Yet whoever has seen the singular farrago of patriotism and lawless independence, of folly and common sense, called the Greek people, and gazed from the marvellous colonnades of the Parthenon upon the plain of Athens and the blue Ægean gleaming with white lateen sails, cannot read without emotion the brief notices of the recent *coup d'état* in Greece which appear in our newspapers. To us they have recalled many delightful memories, and induced us once more to glance over the pages of the works whose titles head this article.

M. About has for some time been favorably known in America as a sparkling and attractive writer. He and Michelet, the author of certain questionable publications which have had considerable circulation, shared about equally the courtesy extended in this country to contemporary French literature for the three or four years preceding the appearance of *Les Misérables*. The one was devoured with avidity in the boudoir ; the other gained at once the respect of thinkers and the interest of the pleasure-loving, "The King of the Mountains" having been exhibited on the boards at Wallack's. While Michelet deals in prurient sentimentality such as can be produced only in France, where conceptions of the moral virtues are factitious, About, practical as a broker on 'change and *gaillard* as Mercutio, dresses up dry statistics and unpalatable facts in the most piquant form, and crystallizes the results of his experience into romances which are too lifelike to be artificial. When we allow that an author possesses wit, imagination, talent, we award to him no higher merit than falls to the lot of many writers in these days wherein mighty scribblers abound. But when we discover one who is endowed with all these qualities employing the graces of an engaging style to embellish columns of figures and to register uninviting details, and at the same time trustworthy in his statements beyond the ordinary measure of a mere statistician, we may well consider him a phenomenon ; and such is M. About. Of a mercurial temperament, racy, humorous, wielding a ready irony,—a

composer of novels, a collector of facts, and every inch of him as genuine a Frenchman as ever muttered *Sacre!* and ate frogs, — a Parisian, and a man whom Louis Napoleon has subsidized for his own purposes, — and yet, *mirabile dictu!* he tells the truth!

Victor Hugo having rather taken the wind out of the sails of his contemporaries by his stupendous romance, About has of late been treated among us with a neglect which he little deserves. Less pretentious than Victor Hugo's, more moral than Michelet's, his books should continue to be read and studied as correct representations of society in the South of Europe during the nineteenth century, long after *Les Misérables* and *L'Amour* have taken their places beside Scudéri's *Le Grand Cyrus* and *Les Femmes Galantes* of Brantôme, of which only the titles are now remembered.

It is not too much to assert that *La Grèce Contemporaine* is the most admirable transcript of Modern Greece which has been given to the public. The author's terse, epigrammatic style, his keen, but polished irony, and his sallies of humor, secure for him the attention of the reader from the outset; but it is the perfect conversance which he shows with his subject that should chiefly enlist confidence and interest in his favor. Conversance but feebly conveys an idea of the familiarity the writer possesses with the physical appearance of the country, the people, their customs and prejudices, their abilities and defects, and the condition of the government, its revenues, army, and navy, its venality and universal good-for-nothingness. Nor does he confine himself to making general statements, but he fortifies his positions with figures that cannot lie. To obtain in three years all that is contained in this little work, and to sprinkle its pages so liberally with Attic salt, argues singular acumen and penetration, as well as facility with the pen. Instead of observing the Greek character, we might almost say that he assimilates himself to it; for one would suppose that none but a native could form such accurate notions concerning national traits. This sort of intuitive perception of the genius and institutions of a people foreign to their own, seems to be a specialty of the French. Their easy pliability enables them to adapt themselves to the

climate and habits of the regions where they may happen to be, and the consequence is, that to the piquancy of the Parisian mode of expression they add the flavor of reality. He who reads De Tocqueville and About with candor, must confess that better books of the kind than the "Democracy" and *La Grèce Contemporaine* have not been seen by the men of this generation. Not that in style or profoundness these works are susceptible of comparison. Their only point of resemblance is, that in them both the authors aim at giving a correct representation of the social characteristics of nations other than their own, and in this respect they not only succeed, but distance all their competitors. If About is less dignified than his great master in the art of national portrait-painting, we apprehend that it is owing as much to the nature of the subject treated of, as to the inferior qualifications of the man.

In fact, the style of our author, so dashing and irreverent, so unsparing of many of the poetic associations with which the world of intellect has invested the people of Modern Greece, so minute in noting the most unromantic details, — this style, we say, while it gains the attention, is also liable to shock the preconceived notions of those who seem to think that the practical common-sense view with which we are accustomed to observe other matters is irrelevant when classic lands are in question. In his words: "The name of Greece, even more than that of Spain or Italy, is full of promise. You will not meet with a young man in whom that name does not awaken ideas of beauty, of light, and of quiet happiness. The least studious school-boys, who inveigh most eloquently against Grecian history and Greek translations, — even if they fall asleep over their lexicon, they dream of Greece. I expected to find a sky without a cloud, a sea without a ruffle, a spring without end." Now this is precisely the view of the Levant taken by those who know of it only through books; but it is not the fault of the East, nor does it detract from its genuine and peerless glories, that its skies are visited by storms, that its grand old mountains are rugged and scarred from their battle with the ages, and that its plains, though rich in historic interest, have been left devastated by the tramp of mailed warriors for thousands of years. To find regions entirely

free from these disturbances, one must visit the Isles of the Blest.

The difficulty has been heretofore, that those who have written books on the Orient have been chiefly of two classes. First are they who are so gifted with an eye for the picturesque, who so highly appreciate legendary associations, and so easily accommodate themselves to the novelties and inconveniences of travel, that they are moved to compose poems and prose rhapsodies, which often correctly represent the more attractive phases of the "Eastern question." Kinglake, Curtis, Gautier, Curzon, and Morier are eminent disciples of this school, of which Byron is the master-spirit. Correct and trustworthy as far as they go, they fail to give us an insight into internal affairs, the true condition of political matters, or the actual relations which underlie the surface of society in the countries of which they treat. These are the writers whom an intelligent public has been pleased to accept and honor as faithful witnesses, and not without reason. They miss complete success only because in them the poetic element has predominated, — by no means a deadly sin in this money-making age, and when one is gossiping about "the clime of the sun."

The other class of writers on the East are those who can view objects only with the spectrum of Wall Street or the "Bourse" in their eye, who "do" Greece, Turkey, Egypt, and the Holy Land in a month, encounter nothing but dust and vermin, grumble through the whole of the trip, and on their return, "at the request of a few friends," publish "A Gallop to Jericho." Fortunately for the lands they describe, they are generally more apt at stock-jobbing than at book-making, and their literary ventures receive the neglect they deserve.

M. About strikes a medium between these two classes. Well versed in Grecian history and antiquities, as is proved by his work on the archæology of Ægina, and thoroughly appreciating and enjoying the beauties of the country of which he writes, he yet makes these subordinate to a precise and faithful account of the present state of society in Greece, and he is withal possessed of so keen a mental perception as to detect facts which lie in the background, and elude the eye of all but those initiat-

ed into the mysteries of the Greek character by birth or residence in the land. This it is that imparts such freshness to his works. He gives us an insight into the social system of Greece, and exhibits the government and the people, not as they appear to the passing tourist or the superficial observer, but as they are. As was remarked above, some see only the poetry of Greece, others cannot vilify it enough. M. About avoids both extremes. Perfectly aware of the corrupt condition of the national economy and the inconsistencies of the Hellenic character, he also recognizes the physical beauty of the race, their thirst for knowledge, their aptness in acquiring it, and whatever other praiseworthy traits they may possess. He speaks, indeed, of the soil as sterile and destitute of streams; but surely no one has given a more valuable survey of the landscapes of Greece, for he also discerns that the splintered crags of her mountains, empurpled by the setting sun as they tower against the deep blue of her skies, are radiant with a glory such as was never seen on the forest-robed mountains of the Western world. Those who complain that M. About is too severe, would do well to read his work with care. They will find that it abounds with such passages as the following, which are particularly forcible because coming from one who does not scruple to utter unpleasant truths.

“I persist in thinking that she [Greece] has not obtained her name under false pretences. . . . You can find there trees and refreshing landscapes, if you take the trouble to look for them; and then, too, sterility has its own beauty quite as much as abundance, — it has even, if I am not mistaken, a beauty of a greater originality. I admit that Greece is not like Normandy, — so much the worse for Normandy. Perhaps the country was more wooded, greener, and better watered, in ancient times; the forests have been burned, the rains have carried away the soil, and the rocks have been laid bare. It would not be difficult to make the whole of Greece grow green again, — a few millions and a few years would be sufficient. . . . Will it be more beautiful? I doubt it. The Acropolis of Athens, which is the most admirable rock in the world, is a hundred times more so in summer, when the sun has burnt up the grass, than in March, when it is patched here and there with green. If an enchanter or a capitalist produced the miracle of changing the Morea into another Normandy, he would obtain as his reward the unanimous maledictions of all artists.”

Once more he remarks, speaking of the *physique* of the Greeks : —

“ The Greek race has very little degenerated, and those tall young men with a slender waist, oval face, quick eye, and ready wit, who fill the streets of Athens, are surely of the family that furnished models to Phidias.”

Again he observes : —

“ The Greek nation is vivacious, lively, sober, intelligent, witty, and proud of its advantages ; it loves passionately liberty, equality, and its country ; but it is undisciplined, jealous, selfish, and unscrupulous, and has a strong dislike to manual labor.”

Nothing could be more true or impartial than this brief but striking delineation of the Greek character.

The book is enriched with many passages like the foregoing, which we have quoted as proofs that it is written in a spirit of fairness, a merit which some are unwilling to accord to it, even while admitting the ability of the author. It is unnecessary to cite his statements concerning the government, or to analyze the novel style in which he commends new and startling facts to the reader's notice ; for the passages to which we refer are of such a nature as to gain the assent, if not the approval, of any one who takes pains to glance at the book. It is enough for us here to recommend them as justly entitled to credit and respect. The personal anecdotes which M. About so often relates with such zest lend an additional air of reality to his work ; for many of them we know to be no more than the truth. The frequent allusions to the Duchess of Plaisance recall an amusing reminiscence of that whimsical dame. Several distinguished foreigners were invited to dine at her villa on Mount Pentelicus. In the expectation of a sumptuous banquet, most of them failed to fortify themselves for the excursion. After several hours of hard riding they reached the place towards nightfall, half famished, rendered hungry as wolves by the keen mountain-air, and almost devoured by the shepherd-dogs that guarded the approach to the house. The banquet consisted of a piece of sponge-cake and a glass of water for each guest, the Duchess remarking, that persons of their intellectual tastes would doubtless prefer elevating conversation to the discussion of meats and drinks !

Before dismissing *La Grèce Contemporaine* we might observe, that, however the work may differ from other productions of the age, it possesses one trait in common with everything human, — it has its faults. But as these are of secondary importance, and do not detract from its meritorious character, we shall merely glance at one or two of them. Probably it contains no statement that has given more offence both to Greeks and foreigners, than the author's charge of cowardice. No charge is easier to be made, but of none are the specifications so difficult of proof or refutation. If M. About had been content to confine his accusation to the Greeks of to-day, he would have asserted what is not only possible, but credible ; but when he includes the ancients in the count, he weakens the favorable opinion which might be formed of his sagacity, for it is idle to suppose that he could convince any one that the heroes of the Persian, Peloponnesian, and Theban wars were poltroons. If discredit is thrown on the narrative of Thucydides and Xenophon, then what historian of any age is entitled to belief, and what exploit narrated in history is true ? As for his argument that the Greeks were cowards because they fought at Salamis against their will, and only at the instigation of Themistocles, it might be said in reply, that the conduct of all people is dependent on the ability and presence of mind of their leaders, and that, if the battle of Salamis was fought and won by cowards, then may our soldiers all be such as they were, and more also. M. About may recollect that the French have never gained a great pitched battle over the English in modern times, save at Fontenoy, when led by a foreigner, Marshal Saxe, and that they never took the aggressive in Europe with any real and permanent success, until a Corsican arose who urged on their armies to triumph. This does not prove that the French are cowards, but simply shows how much is dependent on leadership, which M. About forgets when he taunts the Greeks with the valor and ability of Themistocles.

He also employs a unique argument to prove his position when he says: "Kanaris, who used to set fire to a fleet by lying alongside of it, was a subject of astonishment to the whole nation." He might have added, that all the world wondered

with the Greeks. He may not have forgotten that the French Republic went into ecstasies over the fate of *Le Vengeur*, — thanks, honors, bonfires, having been awarded to one of the most apocryphal glories that ever tickled the self-esteem of any people.

But letting the past alone, it must be admitted that a large share of discretion tempers the valor of the Greeks of our day, always excepting the Mainiotes (who are worthy descendants of the Spartans) and certain of the mountaineers. This unpleasant fact may be accounted for on reasonable grounds. Luxury, tyranny, or inefficient rule may demoralize a whole nation. But no sooner does a truly patriotic hand once more grasp the reins of government, than the *morale* of the people begins to improve, and courage once more thrills the national heart. There is hardly a nation in the South of Europe that has not, at one time or another, exemplified the truth of this observation, which is often shown on a minor scale by the armies of the bravest people. In this light, we might say that the Greek race is endowed with average magnanimity, but that the Greeks of the present day have degenerated under the force of circumstances, and are therefore pusillanimous.

We should have preferred to see a book that so coolly dissects the nerves of a proud and sensitive people written by one whose own government is less open to the charges he makes against the Greeks; but being a Frenchman is an accident beyond the author's control, and as he might retort, "*Honi soit qui mal y pense*," and send us a challenge with rapiers, which would be a breach of the peace on his part, we refrain from dwelling on this aspect of the question. However, we cannot forbear calling his attention to a quality in which the Greeks excel not only the French, but all Europe, — they can successfully accomplish a *coup d'état* without bloodshed. When we consider the thousands who have fallen behind the barricades of Paris, and the massacres, outrages, and violence which, in 1848, raged in half the cities of the Continent, the singular tact with which they manage a national crisis at Athens is something marvellous; and, to one who is on the ground, it partakes more of the comic than of the tragic. The spirit of

Aristophanes, accompanied by his "Frogs" and "Clouds," seems to control the turn of affairs.

We well recollect the uprising of 1843. At midnight the hoofs of horses were heard clanging on the pavement, the flash of torches gleamed in the streets, as the populace and soldiery hurried towards the palace; and when the amber-colored dawn lighted the Acropolis and the plain of Athens, lo! the king found himself surrounded by his happy subjects, and two field-pieces pointing into the entrance of the royal residence. A constitution was demanded in firm but respectful terms, it being suggested at the same time that, if the request were not granted by four P. M., fire would be opened on the palace. In the mean time, all Athens was gathered in the open space around the palace, chatting, cracking jokes, taking snuff, and smoking, as if they had come to witness a show, or to hear the reading of a will. Not a shot was fired; no violence was offered or received; and precisely as the appointed hour arrived, the obstinate king succumbed to his besiegers, the charter was granted, and the multitude quietly dispersed to their homes. In less than twenty-four hours the form of the government had been changed, and not a drop of blood had been shed; and yet that the importance of this event was not undervalued by the people is proved by many circumstances. Here is an instance of this, which also illustrates the national spirit of insubordination so well exhibited by M. About. Two or three days after the crisis, a crowd of boys was seen in the streets, hilarious, and shouting, "Long live the Constitution!" "Well, my boys, what's the row?" inquired a by-stander. "O, our schoolmaster flogged one of the boys, so we rose and flogged the master. Are we not also Greeks? Long live the Constitution!" *

Of the same character was the last revolution in Greece, only still more effective than the former. Otho goes on a royal progress to Napoli; during his absence from Athens there is an uprising of the disaffected, the government is overthrown, and his Majesty, finding himself without a throne, does not even revisit his capital, but steps on board ship, returns to the

* Ζήτω τὸ σύνταγμα, — Long live the Constitution!

land of his nativity, and is laid on the shelf. A provisional government succeeds, during which another king is chosen, even Prince George of Denmark, on whom be peace! The revolutionists have dethroned one monarch and chosen another, and not a life is lost. Is not this truly a singular people?

In *Le Roi des Montagnes* M. About attempts a more ambitious flight, confident in the versatility of his powers; and we think he has achieved a success in the execution of this romance, in which the results of his experience and observation are given in a form that may prove more acceptable to a majority of his readers than *La Grèce Contemporaine*, for the simple reason that novels are more popular than essays, or travels, or histories. Hadgi Stavros, the King of the Mountains, is the chief of a band of robbers infesting the defiles of Mount Parnes, on the confines of Attica. He is educating his only daughter at a fashionable school in the Greek capital, holds commercial relations with persons of good position in that city, and invests the profits derived from his profession in London, employing an English firm as his agents, who, it is charitable to suppose, are ignorant of his business. This consists in levying heavy ransoms on unsuspecting foreigners, not to speak of minor speculations, such as attacking the government mails and sacking unoffending villages. Hadgi Stavros is the type of a class of the Greek race that was oftener found in the period preceding the war of independence than at the present day, although such personages are not scarce even now among the fastnesses of Sûli and on the iron seaboard of Maina, — portly, dignified, proud, patriotic, brave, shrewd, fond of children, well preserved to extreme old age, and worthy of a nobler career. Lord Byron's Lambro, the corsair in Don Juan, is the only character in the whole range of literature on the East that approaches M. About's portrait. In the other *dramatis personæ* of the book the English, French, German, and American nations are represented, and to the life. Especially, if there is one thing which M. About appreciates better than another, it is the English character. Intrigue, robbery, meanness, courage, cowardice, courting, fighting, and dying, bits of picturesque scenery, and the truth, have their respective niches in this remarkable romance, and the whole is

pervaded by a humor so exquisite and irresistible, that whoever was thrown into a bad mood over *La Grèce Contemporaine* must be indeed incorrigible if he does not relax his countenance over *Le Roi des Montagnes*. We forbear to mar the pleasure of a first perusal of this book by giving an analysis of the plot, preferring to confine ourselves to a few remarks by way of corroborating the facts on which this tale is founded ; for we anticipate that even he who most enjoys it will be incredulous as to the reality of this phase of society in the Levant, so totally at variance with our notions of what is consistent with civilization.

“I recognize Mrs. Simons and John Harris at a glance,” says one ; “they are capital, the purse-proud, practical, self-opinionated British matron, the self-confident and irresistible scion of Young America. But this Hadgi Stavros is a strange creature, — unquestionably an imaginary character ; the lines of his portrait are effective enough, and he makes a very fine Salvator Rosa sketch, but it would be absurd to suppose that his original exists in free, classic Greece in this enlightened age. Robbers you will undoubtedly find in Tartary, but this man, drawing bills of exchange on London, and carrying off tourists to his mountain den, is purely a figment of the brain. You ’ve done well, M. About, very well, but ——” Such thoughts have probably been uttered by two thirds of the author’s readers in America ; but they are wrong, and he is right. Here is a little fact which we take from the New York Observer, bearing the date of March 26, 1863, proving not only the existence of brigandage around Athens in 1855, but also at this very day. “The son of one of the wealthiest families in Athens, who was carried off by brigands some time ago, has been restored to his friends, on condition that his father pays a ransom of forty thousand drachmas, and the robbers receive amnesty from the government, — the captain of the band to be made an adjutant in the regular army.” Surely no one would accuse the correspondents of so conscientious a journal as the Observer of being in collusion with M. About, and yet it looks very much like it to those who are disposed to discredit the statements in “The King of the Mountains.”

The bandit of the Levant is a sort of privileged character,

whom time has left to this generation, to remind us, amid the strange mutations of our day, of Robin Hood and his merry men. *Le Roi des Montagnes* is a prose epic, the "Lyttell Geste" of the nineteenth century. The Greek Klepht, or brigand, is an historic personage, worthy of mention in the chronicles of the time,—a link between our own and former ages. To trace his origin, we must look, not to any inclination which the Greek, above other races, may possess for a lawless life,—although he takes to it very kindly; we must turn back to a period anterior to the Greek Revolution,—even more, we must cast our eyes back twelve hundred years, to Mahomet, the camel-driver of the desert. To him may be ascribed the conquest of the Greco-Roman empire, and the consequent subjugation of Greece to the Ottoman sway. It was hatred of the Turkish yoke that gave almost superhuman energy to the arm of Scanderbeg; the same impulse, transmitted from generation to generation, inspired the brigands, or, if you prefer, the warriors, of Sûli to wage perpetual warfare with the Moslem; and this spirit it was—a singular blending of religion, patriotism, and lawless freedom—that caused the mountains of Greece to swarm with Klephts, or banditti, at the period immediately preceding the war of independence. There was considerable genuine romance connected with the lives of these mountaineers. They gave rise to the only poetry of Modern Greece that is worthy of record. Their wild, simple, plaintive ballads of love and war seem to retain a spark of Homeric fire; but on the establishment of peace with the hereditary foe, even this faint echo of the ancient lyre ceased, we fear, forever.

Many of the prominent leaders in the Revolution had been chieftains of note, combining in their lives and character the daring freedom and portly bearing of the feudal lord and the unscrupulous ferocity of the Italian cutthroat. When that heroic struggle was over, and it became unlawful to rob and murder Turks, they found their occupation gone. Some of them settled down into scheming, restless politicians, while others, feeling uneasy, as does the sailor who retires after a life at sea, sighed for their old adventures, sometimes trying, like Griziotés, to raise an insurrection, sometimes returning to their evil ways, and, for lack of Turks, occasionally worrying a poor

“Christian dog,” — with the precaution of keeping their souls safe by a strict attention to the fast-days of Holy Church. It is needless to say, that so far this has proved a profitable and not dishonorable pursuit, and it is easy to see how the old Klephts found proselytes. Thus it is evident that the present brigands of Attica are the lineal successors of the outlaws under the Turkish dominion. But outlaws in Greece once possessed higher motives than those of mere gain, and represented a contest between races and religions, somewhat as Robin Hood and his merry men are supposed to have been representatives of a struggle long maintained between the Saxons and their Norman subjugators. Now, however, that the cause of the contest no longer exists, it has degenerated into a system of unmitigated villany, a disgrace to the Greek nation.

Not content with confining their depredations to one locality, these pious disciples of the Oriental Church have repeatedly transferred their operations to Ionia, on the western coast of Asia Minor, as if remembering that of old this was peopled by flourishing Greek communities, and anxious that it should share the blessings of its sister Hellas. For the last dozen years the Pachalic of Smyrna has been afflicted by these pests of society. Who has not eaten the figs and the raisins of Smyrna, the “Ornament of Asia,” the “Crown of Ionia”? Situated at the head of a bay that rivals the charms of the Bay of Naples, environed with perennial gardens, girt with a diadem of lovely villages, fragrant with the odorous airs that breathe in the serene *Ægean* skies, dowered with the wealth of historic associations, still dispensing fruits to the world with a liberal hand, — watched by the old Roman citadel, — the grim battlements of the Knights of St. John still reflected in the waters of her port, — Smyrna, the city of the Moslem, the Greek, and the Frank, is a living poem. He who has sojourned there for a fortnight dreams of her in his subsequent travels, and he who has happily dwelt there for years longs for her in other lands, and sighs that destiny separates him from the vineyards and olive-groves, the villas and ruins, the Caravan Bridge and the bazaars, the delicious breezes and star-eyed maidens of Smyrna. With such kindness does she welcome the child of the West to her bosom, that no city in the Levant

can boast so large a proportion of foreign residents. So considerable, in fact, is the Christian population, that the Turks call it *Ghiaôor Ismir*, — “Infidel Smyrna.”

In the villages of Bowmabat, Kookloojâh, Sedy Keny, and Boujâh, the Franks have spent their summers time out of mind. Hares, partridges, and wild-boars fell at the crack of their rifles on the neighboring mountains and moors, and they lived as if lords of the soil, receiving from the peasantry the deference awarded to foreigners in the East, especially to the English. But a few years ago a change came over their dream of content. Brigands were rumored to have been seen in their vicinity; then the news came that the Tartar, or government mail-carrier, had been waylaid and murdered on the road to Ephesus. The robberies became more frequent, and gradually approached the environs of the city. At length all Smyrna was thrown into an uproar by the intelligence that M. Van Lennep, the Dutch Vice-Consul, had been carried off to the mountains, subject to the payment of seventy-five thousand piasters. Sauntering one afternoon in his vineyard, a stone's throw from his villa at Sedy Keny, gun in hand, and accompanied by his children, he was instantaneously surrounded by men armed to the teeth, who seemed to spring out of the ground. The children were allowed to return home, while he was conducted into the wilds of Anatolia. The messenger who brought the news to the city was the captive's gardener, and he was enjoined to bring the ransom within thirty-six hours, as he valued his own and his master's life. Pending the absence of the gardener, M. Van Lennep was hurried from one mountain to another, — his captors being constantly on the alert against the appearance of a troop of soldiery virtuous enough to attempt his rescue. He was treated with all civility, and found his entertainers armed with Belgian rifles, and provided with London spy-glasses, through which he was permitted to gaze from the peak of the Two Brothers on his own residence in Smyrna, like Christian on the Delectable Mountains, viewing the Celestial City through the perspective glass of the shepherds. On the payment of the ransom he was promptly liberated. The Sultan was fain to compound this affair with the Dutch government by pre-

senting the insulted official with a superb gold snuff-box, richly mounted with diamonds.

Yany Katerdgee was the chieftain who opened the campaign with such startling exploits. Short, thick-set, and muscular, he was well adapted for the perilous career he had chosen. Encouraged by his extraordinary success, he and his band followed it up by a long series of captures, outrages, and alarms. Dr. Macraith, a prominent English physician, was swooped up on a summer's day while hunting. He found that sporting may prove a costly amusement. Two ghostly fathers, members of the Jesuit mission, were taking an airing one afternoon on the crumbling Roman ramparts of the Castle Hill, near the amphitheatre where Polycarp was burned, and almost within hail of the city and the quarters of the garrison. They were doubtless engaged in pious converse, as they gazed on the picturesque town and the lovely bay, flecked with sails, which lay at their feet. But their holy meditations received a sudden interruption. Many a nightmare and fit of indigestion they have doubtless endured since then, when calling to mind the experience of that evening.

The villages of Boujâh and Sedy Keny were almost forsaken by the Franks. At night the brigands came down from the mountains and danced with the servant-maids in the country-seats of the English gentlemen. The English chaplain and his family were almost the only foreign residents who dared to pass the summer in Boujâh ; but his daughters practised at target-shooting. One of them, however, was nearly carried off, and the family suddenly returned to town.

Nor was this all. M. About says of Athens : " In the month of April, 1856, it was dangerous to go out of the city ; there was even some imprudence *in staying in it.*" This was also true of Smyrna. The robbers were known by sight to many there, and might occasionally be seen in the streets, dressed in European disguise, as gentlemen, sporting spectacles, canes, and jewelry, and purchasing articles necessary to their profession. At Easter, and other festivals of the orthodox Church, the rogues were among the most devout at St. Demetry's shrine, in Frank Street. Rarely did these pious varlets allow their consciences to reproach them like the conscience of the ancient outlaw, —

“Ze on thyngre greves me,
And does my hert myche woe,
That I may not so solem day
To mas nor matyns goo.”

But more. The wealthy residents of the city occasionally received notes couched somewhat as follows: “M—— will find it to his interest to deposit six thousand piasters in such a spot by Thursday week. Disregard of this modest request might prove prejudicial to his health.” Such drafts were repeatedly drawn on the private coffers of the Smyrniotes by these kings of the mountains.

The reader may very properly inquire why the knaves were not captured or dispersed, and the only reply that can be given will appear ridiculous to our order-loving citizens. It was no joke to ferret out these foxes from their philosophic retreats among the defiles of Tachtalee, especially when the peasantry were more or less in league with them, and gave timely notice of the approach of the troops; and when the latter acted on a tacit understanding that, if the robbers went one way, the soldiery should vigorously follow up the scent in the opposite direction. The rude Arnaoot guards hardly considered a few cents per diem a sufficient “war risk,” not to mention the *douceurs* from the opposite party that accidentally reached their pockets.

But if it was impossible to entrap the robbers themselves, why not at least weaken their power by apprehending their most notorious accomplices in Smyrna? “What would you have?” responds their unhappy victim, shrugging his shoulders. “If I denounce well-known villains, I shall fall by the dagger or the bullet. I am not yet prepared to sacrifice myself for the public good, because, forsooth, the government is inefficient.”

Such was the actual state of things in and around Smyrna for years. At length the Sublime Porte arrived at a “realizing sense” of the necessity of taking more stringent measures. Khaleel Pacha, brother-in-law of Abdul Medjid, a man of energy, was sent to Smyrna, and a new *régime* was inaugurated. The band was broken up. Some of the brigands might be seen from time to time suspended from a gable at

the entrance to the bazaars, and Yany Katerdgee was "fast bound" in the Bagnio, the Ottoman state-prison on the Golden Horn. After two or three years he contrived to gain his liberty, whether by bribery or not being best known to his keepers; but ere he could resume his sceptre on the highways, death cut short the schemes of the bandit chieftain, "and the land had rest" for a brief interval. But recent intelligence from Smyrna informs us that the brigands are once more active in their old haunts.

Those who peruse these singular facts regarding the flourishing condition of thievery in the Levant might reasonably infer that society in the East does not keep pace with the age. The truth, perhaps, is this. Brigandage was very much the condition of Greece previous to the war of independence, and it is difficult for a people to throw off at once the semi-barbarism in which they were enveloped scarce a generation ago, however disposed they may be toward real progress. Greece is like a man long subject to evil passions and desperate fortunes, who determines on a new course of life, but finds the ghosts of his former hardships and sins continually haunting him, and sometimes paralyzing his efforts after reform. She has not yet recovered from her licentious life under the Romans, from the monkery of the Dark Ages under the Eastern Empire, and from her slavery and predatory warfare under the Turks. Would you ask miracles of her?

"A thousand years scarce serve to form a state;

An hour may lay it in the dust; and when

Can man its shattered splendor renovate,

Recall its virtues back, and vanquish Time and Fate?"

Is it strange, then, the robbers infest the mountains of Greece? Was it not in the last century that highwaymen beset the environs of London, and Fielding wrote his "Enquiry into the Causes of the late Increase of Robberies"? Yet those were the days of Pope and Marlborough, of Johnson and Burke. Let us not despair of Greece. Does her population increase but slowly? That of France has decreased in the last decade. Did Otho attempt to control the elections? So does Louis Napoleon. Are the people sunk in ignorance? So are the peasantry of France. Is there religious intolerance

in the little kingdom? So there is in France. Does the budget declare an annual deficit? So does that of France, and France is one of the Five Great Powers. Let us be just. Although the population of Greece is slow of growth, yet it does increase. Although her internal affairs are in a deplorable state, they cannot become much worse, and may improve on the instalment of the new king. Although agriculture is poorly understood, it receives more attention than formerly. The large number of mulberry, fig, and olive trees that have been planted within the last few years has added substantially to the wealth of the country, and given employment to many. It is not so much on account of her actual condition that we contemplate the future of Greece with little complacency, as from the flippancy and shallowness to which the lapse of ages has reduced the national character; and still, on considering the really valuable qualities which the Greeks retain, in spite of their failings, we cannot but feel assured that destiny will yet restore them to an elevation more worthy of a race that boasts such illustrious ancestry.

But while in Greece robbery is a relic of the past ages, in Turkey it is a sign of dissolution. The disturbances in the Pachalic of Smyrna are indices of her downfall. The civil wars of 1831 and 1839 demonstrated how feebly the Ottoman Empire is now held together. No longer does the Sultan grasp his dominions with the firm gripe of Solyman the Magnificent. Egypt, Palestine, Koordistan, Anatolia, Macedonia, and the Principalities, are states maintained under one sceptre by no internal bond of sympathy. Only withdraw the pressure of the European cabinets from without, and the unwieldy fabric crumbles to pieces, and resolves itself into as many distinct nations as are now represented by provinces. It is easy to see that in such a state of affairs the demon of anarchy will assume many forms, whether it be the Koords attacking unoffending missionaries, or the Druses and Maronites perpetuating their hereditary feuds, or a crew of *enfants perdus* from Athens or the Ionian Isles levying black-mail in the environs of Smyrna. It may be objected that Turkey has made more true progress within the last twenty years than Greece. But granting the fact, it only proves with additional force what has just

been stated. The constitution or basis of the empire is the Koran ; and in proportion as the obligatory power of that arbitrary religious code is undermined by the progressive spirit of the age, the vigor of the central government is undermined. These reforms doubtless improve individual provinces and races, thereby preparing them the better to assert their independence ; but they also strike at the heart of Islamism, and sweep away the only internal agent that has ever kept the Ottoman Empire unbroken. It is the conflict between the Crescent and the Cross brought to a final issue, and the Cross must prevail ; but, pending the final result, disorders will exist to a greater or less degree.

Of the literary merits of M. About's works we have said but little ; these have been already discussed by abler critics. It has been our aim to show that his representations of society in the Levant are trustworthy. One of the characters in "The King of the Mountains" says : "Do you know what protects us against the displeasure of Europe ? It is the unreal character of our civilization. . . . I could mention to you a little book (*La Grèce Contemporaine*) which is not to our praise, although it may be correct from beginning to end. It has been read a little everywhere ; it was thought curious in Paris, but I know only one city where it may have appeared true : — Athens !" This is exactly the case. M. About's works are read, for they are entertaining ; but the facts in them are discredited. If we have been able to prove that veracity is not the least of his qualifications as an author, our object has been accomplished.